



Delivering Results...

Since July of 2006, the Assign-A-Highway Coordinator has been collecting program data on a monthly basis from each locality implementing Assign-A-Highway. From July 2006 through June 2007, data has been collected and can now show program results for a full fiscal year.



The program has expanded throughout Virginia in the past year, from far Southwest Virginia to the Eastern Shore. In early 2006, there were only seven localities implementing the program and there are now 28 programs statewide. The program has seen much success in the past and the future looks just as bright. For the past year, Assign-A-Highway has been able to utilize probationary labor of 9,498 individuals. With that many people working on the program, there have been 6,713 miles cleaned and maintained throughout the Commonwealth. Having cleaned up almost 7,000 miles, one would expect a lot of litter has been collected and that is a correct assumption. During the past fiscal year, 61,309 bags were filled, which is approximately 3,096 Tons. Wow! That is a lot of soda bottles, fast food bags and other assorted types of litter. The program has also saved local governments thousands of dollars, which is a good incentive for them to adopt the program. Localities in Virginia have been able to capitalize on 59,816 man hours saved from the program. When you calculate those cost savings based on the minimum wage of \$5.15 per hour, the program has saved local governments just over \$308,000. That results in big savings, for such a simple program.

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Virginia Towns Jump on Board...

Ever since the City of Norton adopted Assign-A-Highway in December of 2006, some urban areas have been keeping a close eye on just how the program functions. Blaine Delaney, coordinator for the Black Diamond Resource Conservation & Development Council, approached his board on the idea of promoting the program to its member towns. The idea was to help localities that did not have strong litter control programs to start off on a smaller scale to see how a program could potentially work on a larger scale. This also allowed smaller communities to share some of the success that their larger, county counterparts have achieved. On July 9, 2007, the Town of St. Paul, Virginia became the first town in the Commonwealth of Virginia to adopt the Assign-A-Highway program. Since then, several other towns have requested information about implementing the program. Of those towns, Lebanon, Coeburn, Gate City, Pound, Pennington Gap have all requested information. The Town of Wise has adopted the program, becoming the second town in Virginia to implement the program. All of the town programs are being modeled from the work done in the City of Norton. As in the city, the towns have probationers assigned to multiple blocks, parking lots, parks, and two mile sections on longer roads within the town limits.

GWRC Takes the Regional Approach...



George Washington Regional Commission in Planning District Commission 16 has taken a cue from its neighbors just east in the Northern Neck Planning District Commission. In January 2007, the Northern Neck hired Virginia Goode to oversee the Assign-A-Highway program for its four counties. The area has seen great success with the regional approach. GWRC, which consists of the counties of Caroline, King George, Spotsylvania, Stafford, and the City of Fredericksburg, has hired Assistant Regional Planner Laurel Hammig to work with the individual localities to implement the Assign-A-Highway program as well as the commission's Highway Beautification Program which is all under the GWRegion First Impression Program. Laurel is currently in the process of promoting and assisting the five localities with implementation of the program. Her involvement will be somewhat different than Virginia Goode's role in the program. Laurel will not only be the direct supervisor for the program in select areas, but she will also assist local litter program managers with their own individual programs as well. Spotsylvania County will be one of those individual programs that will monitor its own Assign-A-Highway program with the recent hiring of new Litter Control Technicians.

"The major goal is to get the program established and then have the individual localities monitor the program independently of the commission," says Hammig.

This region is well known throughout the state for its litter prevention efforts and now anticipation for even more success is very high.

Virginia Litter Control Association...

After traveling across the state and having many conversations with litter program managers, whether they work for a local government or state agency, the same topic keeps reoccurring. Many have commented that there is not enough enforcement for litter violations. This is a problem that is occurring all over the state, both rural and urban.

The idea of an association had come up over a year ago to battle issues that litter control officers were facing. At the time, litter control officers needed a voice in Richmond to be heard on their legitimacy as enforcement officers. A couple of months went by and the idea was still being tossed around about the association. I thought the idea of a Virginia Litter Control Officers Association was a great idea and I began to ask some of the litter control officers if they were willing to make it a reality. They replied, "Yes!"

A coordinating committee was formed from five members of Keep Southwest Virginia Beautiful. After doing some research, I had come across an association in South Carolina comprised of law enforcement, litter officers, zoning officers, and citizens. The South Carolina Litter Control Association is the type of association we would like to be. I took this to the other members and recommended a name change from litter control officer association to Virginia Litter Control Association. They agreed on the grounds that the new name seemed to encompass all forms of enforcement personnel rather than just litter control officers.

Months went by and research has been finished on what is needed to begin this statewide association. On Thursday, Nov. 1, 2007 at 10 a.m., Keep Southwest Virginia Beautiful will host the first statewide meeting of the association in Charlottesville, Virginia called the Virginia Litter Control Summit. At this meeting, the hopes are that representatives across the state will feel just as strongly as the coordinating committee does about the enforcement aspect of litter control and other environmental laws. By the end of the summit, our hopes are that a board will be elected and committees will be created to begin working on future objectives.



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